



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

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RECEIVED

MAY 15 2003

DEQ
Planning Division

May 9, 2003

Ref: 8EPR-EP

Mr. Art Compton, Director
Planning, Prevention and Assistance Division
Department of Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Re: TMDL Approvals
Big Creek/Sediment

Dear Mr. Compton:

We have completed our review of the total maximum daily load (TMDL) as submitted by your office for sediment in Big Creek located within the North Fork Flathead River Basin. The TMDL is included in the document entitled Watershed Restoration Plan for Big Creek, North Fork of the Flathead River (Montana Department of Environmental Quality) transmitted to us for review and approval in correspondence dated March 26, 2003 and signed by you. Enclosure 1 to this letter provides a summary of the elements of the TMDLs and Enclosure 2 provides details of our review of the TMDLs.

Based on our review, we feel the separate TMDL elements listed in Enclosure 2 adequately address the pollutants of concern, taking into consideration seasonal variation and a margin of safety.

In accordance with the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1251 *et. seq.*), we approve all aspects of the TMDL as developed for Big Creek. In approving these TMDLs, EPA affirms that the TMDL has been established at a level necessary to attain and maintain the applicable water quality standards and has the necessary components of an approvable TMDL.

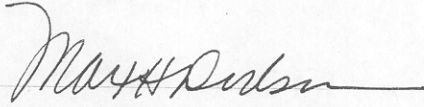
Finally, we wish to inform you that our office has received concurrence from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding our biological evaluations of the approval of the Big Creek sediment TMDL. Our biological evaluation was submitted to the Service in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. In our evaluation, we assessed the effects for our approval on the threatened, endangered, proposed, and candidate species in the area of the TMDLs. Our conclusion was that the TMDL approval would either have no effect or would not likely have an adverse impact on the species of concern. Any effect of the TMDL approvals was seen as either insignificant or beneficial to the species.



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Thank you for your submittal. If you have any questions concerning this approval, feel free to contact Ron Steg in our Helena office at (406) 457-5024.

Sincerely,



Max H. Dodson
Assistant Regional Administrator
Ecosystems Protection and Remediation

Enclosures

cc:

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